

CLAIMS

1. A storage container for storage of samples for analysis, wherein said container comprises a compartment for storage of said sample and a closure for sealing said compartment; wherein said sealed closure incorporates a locking mechanism whereby the sealed closure is manually inoperable after locking.
2. The storage container of claim 1 wherein the samples are biological samples that may be used in medical diagnostic tests.
3. The storage container of claim 2 wherein the samples comprise dried blood, saliva or urine retained by a piece of paper card or a swab.
4. The storage container of claim 1 wherein a medium retaining the sample may be securely locked into the container immediately after said sample has been collected.
5. The storage container of claim 4 wherein the medium includes a filter paper card or a swab.
6. The storage container of claim 1 wherein at least a portion of the container is transparent and an identifier for the sample is secured inside the container whereby the sample identifier is inaccessible and resistant to external tampering.
7. The storage container of claim 6 wherein the sample identifier includes an identification label carrying a barcode or an electronic memory for storing sample identification data.
8. The storage container of claim 1 wherein the sample is fixed to a small sliding platform inside the container, whereby the sliding platform may be withdrawn from the container upon release of the locking mechanism to enable access to the sample for processing.

9. The storage container of claim 1 further comprising a memory to record the number of times the sample has been accessed.

5 10. The storage container of claim 9 wherein the memory comprises a physical tab that is broken, a mechanical counter that is incremented, or an electronic memory further recording the time and date of each accession.

11. A storage container for storage of a biological sample for analysis, wherein said container comprises:

- 10 a body defining a compartment for storage of said sample;
a platform for retaining the sample, which platform is slidably received within the compartment;
a closure for an opening in the body through which the platform may be withdrawn from the compartment; and
15 a locking mechanism for the container whereby manual access to the sample is prevented after locking.

12. The storage container of claim 11 wherein the locking mechanism secures the platform within the compartment.

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13. The storage container of claim 11 wherein the locking mechanism secures the closure.

14. The storage container of claim 11 wherein the locking mechanism is
25 unlocked whilst the container is docked with a testing apparatus for processing the sample.

15. The storage container of claim 14 wherein the platform is only able to be partially withdrawn from the container in order to allow access to the sample by a
30 sampling device of the testing apparatus.

16. The storage container of claim 14 wherein the container may be unlocked with a key that is integral with the testing apparatus.

17. The storage container of claim 11 wherein the sample comprises dried blood, saliva or urine retained by a piece of paper card or a swab.

5 18. The storage container of claim 11 wherein a medium retaining the sample may be securely locked into the container immediately after said sample has been collected.

10 19. The storage container of claim 18 wherein the medium includes a filter paper card or a swab.

20. The storage container of claim 11 wherein at least a portion of the container is transparent and an identifier is secured inside the container whereby the sample identifier is inaccessible and resistant to external tampering.

15 21. The storage container of claim 20 wherein the sample identifier includes an identification label carrying a barcode or an electronic memory for storing sample identification data.

20 22. The storage container of claim 11 further comprising a memory to record the number of times the sample has been accessed.

25 23. The storage container of claim 22 wherein the memory comprises a physical tab that is broken, a mechanical counter that is incremented, or an electronic memory further recording the time and date of each accession.

24. A method of analysing a sample comprising the steps of:
placing a sample into a container, said container having a compartment for receiving the sample and closing said container;
docking said container with a testing apparatus, said testing apparatus having
30 and an interlock means selected to prevent tampering with said sample during the sampling thereof;
accessing the compartment and processing the sample;

closing access to the compartment prior to removing the container from the interlock means and returning the container to storage.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein the sample is a biological sample
5 retained by a medium locked within the container, and the step of processing the sample includes punching a selected portion of the sample from the medium, which punched section is then removed for analysis.

26. The method claim 24 wherein the step of placing the sample in the
10 container further includes placing a sample identifier therein, and the step of docking the container with the test apparatus includes reading the sample identifier, suitably prior to accessing said compartment.

27. A testing apparatus for implementing the method of claim 24, said
15 testing apparatus comprising a docking station including an interlock means selected to prevent tampering with a sample contained in a compartment of the container during access to said sample for processing.

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